



**ADA TOWNSHIP DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA)  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
MINUTES OF JULY 21, 2025, REGULAR MEETING, 8:00 A.M.**

A regular meeting of the Ada Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was held on Monday, July 21, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. at the Ada Township Hall, Assembly Room, 7330 Thornapple River Drive, Ada MI.

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Chair Knapp.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cloutier, Coe, Frost, Idema, Knapp, Korth, Turan

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Harrison, Vogl

**STAFF AND OFFICIALS PRESENT:** DDA Director Austin, Administrative Assistant Buckley, Farmers Market Manager Valverde, Fire Chief Murray

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** 6

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Moved by Coe, supported by Idema, to approve agenda as presented. Motion carried.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MAY 19, 2025, REGULAR MEETING**

Moved by Knapp, supported by Idema, to edit the May 19, 2025, draft minutes by removing the strike-out portion on page 4 of 6, and approve minutes as amended. Motion carried.

**IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**a. Cascade Community Foundation Funding Request: Enterprise Workshop Series**

**i. Justin Swan CCF**

Chair Knapp informed the DDA that he serves on the Cascade Community Foundation and due to a conflict of interest, he recused himself from the DDA Board for this agenda item. *Supervisor Korth Chaired for this item.*

Justin Swan, 246 Shore Haven Dr. SE, Grand Rapids Township, presented the Enterprise Workshop Series, which was piloted two years ago. He said last year the DDA supported funding for the program. He explained that the intention of the Workshop Series is simple. We look at the eyes of the business owners in the community and can recognize there is some need for professional development. Through multiple surveys we have found topics that businesses would like to dive into. The Enterprise Workshop brings in an expert that sits down and shows you how to do things and take that new skill developed and move on with it.

Mr. Swan shared some topic items; quick books, interests in AI, and described the small group size of 30-35 people (small community structure). He introduced Val Lego, she leads instruction, finds the topics, does the surveys, ensuring that she brings forth information that a small non profit community want and

need to do. Ms. Lego shared that Ada Farmers Market vendors found previous workshop sessions beneficial and requested workshops be offered again in 2025.

There was DDA discussion; Korth asked if businesses are charged for participation - Per Mr. Swan, there is no charge for a business to participate, and the workshop is prioritized to Ada, Cascade, and Forest Hills businesses. Additional DDA discussion about funding support for season 4 and 5 workshops, branding and/or possible name change to include Ada, DDA participants in past and future workshops, Ada hosting a workshop, and whether the DDA budgeted funds in 2025 and into 2026 for this contribution.

Moved by Korth, supported by Frost, to approve funding contribution in the amount of \$10,000 to the Cascade Community Foundation in support of the 2025 Enterprise Workshop Series. Motion carried.

*Knapp resumes Chair.*

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

### **a. Streetscape Fixture Proposal**

#### **i. Director Austin**

Austin referred to his memo & maps recommending strategic placement of additional benches, trash receptacles, and recycling receptacles throughout the downtown area. Austin said this proposal aligns with the DDA ongoing efforts to improve streetscape and maintain consistent, high-quality aesthetic in the downtown area. He went through the maps showing existing and proposed locations that were evaluated in May with DDA members, Idema and Cloutier, walkthrough of the areas.

Austin is working with Ada BFG (Building, Facilities & Grounds) on the materials used, quantities, and cost proposal. To ensure visual consistency with current street furnishings, the proposal recommends the purchase of the same model and manufacturer used previously by the Plainwell collection by Landscape Forms.

There was DDA discussion regarding specific locations of benches and the way they were facing, new recycling units and educating their proper use, and possibly add branding/logo to the benches.

Moved by Frost, supported by Turan, to approve the purchase and acquisition of streetscape fixtures from Landscape Forms as presented, for a total of \$50,300.00. Motion carried.

### **b. Love Your Local Update and Proposal**

#### **i. Director Austin**

Austin provided an update on the rollout of the Love Your Local campaign and presented a expense proposal for a postcard mailing to Ada households. Austin said the Love Your Local campaign's goal is to educate residents on the economic and social benefits of supporting locally owned businesses. He went over key rollout milestones: landing page launch, community awareness efforts, business roundtables, and social media/website postings.

Austin said to further increase community awareness and engagement, we are proposing a direct-mail campaign in partnership with Discover Ada, targeting residents in the 49301 zip code.

Mailing Details:

- Target Households: 2,933
- Demographic: Ada family households with incomes over \$100K, a proven responsive segment for past Discover Ada campaigns and is recommended for this initial mailing.

- Vendor: Bright Format (same provider used in a previous successful mailing).
- Cost Estimate: \$2,020.82 (comparable per unit cost to similar mailings by the township).
- Mailing Content: Educational messaging about the *Love Your Local* campaign and how residents can participate, including links to the campaign webpage.

There was brief DDA discussion on marketing the postcard mailing, article in the Adaview, cost per household for the mailing (equivalent to Adaview), have budgeted funds for the marketing, and overall DDA is supportive of the outreach/mailing and partnership with Discover Ada.

Moved by Turan, supported by Idema, to approve the postcard mailing service through Bright Format for an amount not to exceed \$2,020.82 in support of the Love Your Local campaign. Motion carried.

**c. Beers at the Bridge June 20<sup>th</sup> Recap**  
**i. Director Austin**

Austin provided a detailed event report of the June 20<sup>th</sup> event that includes key performance data collected through Placer AI and financial information by the Treasury Department. He said it was a very successful event and touched on key highlights: attendance (approx. 3,115 guests), total sales \$17,557, media exposure (tv appearances & radio), event logistics, survey feedback (45 completed surveys for improvement/ideas), and volunteer planning (49 volunteers helped execute event efficiently).

Idema noted there is a need for more volunteers for the next BATB event. Turan shared concern about the many Wednesday night Music on the Lawn events that have been cancelled. Cloutier said she received feedback calling it ‘event fatigue’ – meaning too many events. Austin said he would contact Parks Director regarding consistency of the Music on the Lawn/Wednesday events.

**VI. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

**a. Parking Plan Update**

Austin provided progress update on the ongoing Parking Plan project with contractor, Fishbeck. Austin said Fishbeck has completed a comprehensive inventory of available parking resources within the study area. These have been mapped up and organized to assist with both current analysis and long-term planning. In addition to the inventory, Fishbeck is actively conducting occupancy counts during representative timeframes to ensure accuracy and relevance. These counts are occurring on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday to capture variations in usage patterns.

Austin noted that for more in-depth input from the DDA Board, a Special Workshop Session has been scheduled. This session will resemble the stakeholder interview format and is intended to gather direct insights and feedback from the Board as we move into the next phases of the planning process. A calendar invite will be sent to all members. Please mark your calendars:

Date: Thursday, August 7, 2025  
Time: 8:30 a.m.  
Location: Community Room #2

**b. Township Hall Design Study: Notre Dame Collaboration**

Austin informed of a new collaborative initiative between Ada Township and the University of Notre Dame’s School of Architecture. The Township Board has approved a partnership with the school’s expert focus group to conduct a constructive review and design study for the Ada Township Hall and its immediate surroundings within the DDA district (Headley Street corridor).

The project kick-off meeting took place on Friday, July 18, with participation from Township staff and representatives from the Notre Dame School of Architecture. Initial discussions focused on project objectives, site context, and design values.

Korth shared that Notre Dame is focused on a new legacy building in the form of the Township Hall and creating a gateway park kind of entrance with a welcoming message as you come into town. Korth said the main Charrette kickoff will be August 18-20, and welcomed all to participate. He also noted that the Board of Trustees has set an aggressive goal to try and break ground on the new building by June 1, 2026.

**c. Revenue and Expenditure Report 6/30/25**

Austin referred to the Report dated 6/30/25 for the DDA to review.

**d. DDA Director Report**

Austin summarized items in his report: 4<sup>th</sup> of July update, upcoming events, farmers market & market manager departure-Austin thanked Valverde for her work, and an update on Complete Streets Pilot Program.

Cloutier pointed out that during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July festivities, someone (a vendor) was selling glow sticks during the concert in the park and during the fireworks, and a Kona ice truck was parked out front of Fruition. Austin said he was not aware of the vendors and will double check with Parks Director Deason.

**e. Farmers Market Manager Report – Raquel Valverde**

Valverde summarized the manager report for July. She said the market opened for the season on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, and it was a strong start with 150-200 attendees each day. There was a slight decrease in foot traffic at the end of June that she feels is attributed to the extreme heat, and the feedback received about parking challenges (due to the construction project). Valverde noted that looking ahead, the Township Hall is expected to undergo construction next year, which may further impact the current market location. The market committee and staff are actively exploring potential new locations. Moving the market location will result in a permanent and more accessible home for the market's future.

Valverde complimented the team of volunteers that continue to be essential in the markets success. She said their dedication is a key part of the market's operation.

Valverde updated on marketing and engagement noting that cross-promotion efforts have been thriving and social media posts are generating positive attention. Lauren and Tara have done a great job with branding marketing and social media.

Valverde said, lastly, my last day with the Township and Market Manager is Tuesday, July 29. She thanked the volunteers at the market and the DDA for their support.

**f. Township Department Head Staff Reports – no additional comments**

**VII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENT**

Cloutier requested an update on the banners. Austin said they have resolved the issue with Fully Promoted and he will revisit/establish the DDA interests in a more developed streetlight banner plan/program. Austin said he will first re-evaluate with BFG Director Brinks for future installation of banners and whether it will be done by BFG staff and BFG equipment.

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT - none**

**IX. ADJOURN MEETING**

Moved by Korth, supported by Idema, to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 a.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted:

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Dawn Marie Coe, DDA Secretary

rs:eb